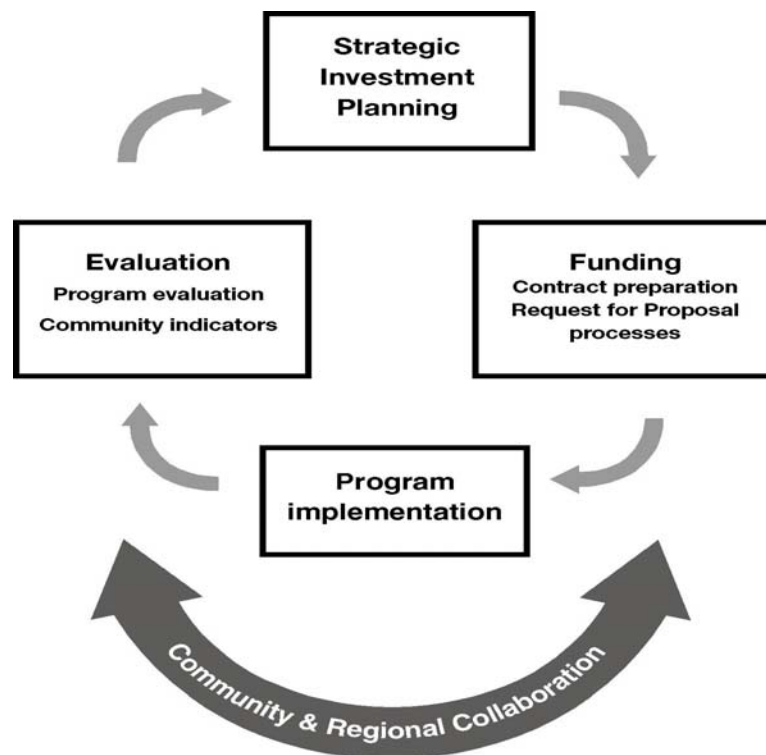


## APPENDIX C: Investment and Accountability System

An on-going cycle of planning, funding, implementing and evaluating is critical to our success. We are continually seeking to strengthen and improve the system. The major components of the system, illustrated in the diagram below, include strategic planning for investments, funding investments via Request for Proposal processes and contract preparation, program implementation, and evaluation, including program evaluation and measurement of community indicators.

**Figure 3. Investment and Accountability System**



### Strategic Investment Planning

Through strategic investment planning, community indicators are identified and program investments are described. Strategies and program investments are based on assessment of community needs and strengths, along with best practices. Program investments are outcome based (programs often consist of multiple agencies working to achieve the same outcomes). Strategic investment plans include a sound policy framework to connect services and programs to desired community impacts.

- ✓ *The Strategic Investment Plan will be reviewed annually and updated every two years to coincide with our biennial budget.*

## **Funding**

The Human Services Department conducts Request For Proposal (RFP) processes to identify and contract with the most efficient, quality programs possible. Funding decisions are made through RFP processes and the negotiation of contracts.

Request For Proposal processes are used to make funding decisions within service areas at a minimum of four-year intervals. RFP processes offer the opportunity to assess the ability of a set of organizations to deliver clearly defined outcomes and is a time for the Department to adjust an area of focus if needed. Different service providers are likely to have unique strategies for achieving outcomes. HSD involves community members in funding processes, especially community members who are the recipients of HSD services.

- ✓ *As of 2002 all program areas will have an RFP process at a minimum of every four years.*

During contract preparation, service performance standards and outcomes are determined. These outcomes will later be assessed to determine quantity or quality of performance and other impacts resulting from the service. Contracts are as streamlined and simple as possible for administrative efficiency purposes.

- ✓ *Department Program Specialists currently receive training and support to ensure the preparation of quality contracts. The Department has aligned our program outcomes with other human service funders, including United Way and King County. We are working to also align the reporting of information to enhance system efficiency.*

## **Program Implementation**

Contract monitoring and assessment takes place to ensure compliance with contract requirements, including performance towards achieving outcomes, fiscal accountability, and maintaining relevant standards.

- ✓ *HSD Program Specialists adhere to Department contract monitoring standards that include standards for contract performance reviews, site visits and procedures for program noncompliance.*

## **Evaluation**

The Department will expand program evaluation to include three levels of evaluation: process evaluation, outcome evaluation and community indicator evaluation.

- **Process evaluations** help to determine which of the service delivery models are most likely to deliver the desired results and outcomes. Process

evaluations will help to identify “best practices,” as determined by objective criteria (such as benchmarking) and input from customers/clients.

- **Program outcome evaluations** measure the effectiveness of programs at achieving the intended outcomes.
- **Community indicators** measure the overall health of our community and are useful for guiding funding decisions. Public investments should be made in programs that effect community change in the desired direction. Both safety net and economic and social success programs should be aligned to influence community indicators; e.g., do emergency food programs affect the percentage of adults who report concern about food? Do programs that move individuals from unemployment to employment translate into more people having a living wage income? This type of evaluation requires partnership with other funders and systems to assure that investments measured are at a high enough level to impact community-wide indicators.
  - ✓ *An HSD priority is to enhance our capacity to do all types of evaluation with a focus on process and community indicator evaluation. Additional detail may be found in the section that follows.*

- **Strengthening Evaluation** as a tool to assess the effectiveness of investments. In 2004, the Department will implement a five-year evaluation plan. Its purpose is to assure the highest possible return on the City’s human service investments. Several mechanisms will be employed, including outcome evaluation and impact on community indicators.

We have developed a set of general principles to guide evaluation efforts.

Evaluations will:

- Be linked to programs that will be in upcoming RFP processes. Evaluation results will then help to inform funding decisions
- Leverage other funders interests in evaluation (United Way, foundations)
- Leverage other institutions expertise in evaluation (Public Health and local universities)
- Incorporate community based agency and resident input to evaluation design, data collection and analysis
- Assess linkages between programs and community indicators

With respect to both outcome evaluation and impact on community indicators, we will work closely with our investment partners to conduct a pilot evaluation of our youth development program.

- ✓ The results of the pilot evaluation will be assessed. What we learn will be used to select the next service areas to be similarly evaluated in 2005-2008.
- ✓ Process and community impact evaluation will be paid for from a set-aside of up to 1% of general funds. Beginning in 2004, up to 1% of each RFP will be set-aside to begin a department-wide evaluation strategy. In order to maximize the purchasing power of these funds, we plan to make use of existing sources of evaluation expertise. We are especially interested in partnering with the Community Research Center, a project of Seattle Partners for Healthy Communities, housed at the Public Health of Seattle-King County's Health Promotion Research Center. We will also leverage funds from our investment partners, such as United Way, who share our interest in assuring that children, youth and families have opportunities to more fully benefit from and contribute to the community.

